

# **SAFETY PLANNING FOR VICTIMS OF ABUSE**

## **What is a Safety Plan?**

- A safety plan is a list of ideas that you can use to help increase your safety.
- Advocates can help you create an individualized safety plan to help you assess your current situation.
- A safety plan can be critical for you if you are considering taking steps to change your current situation.

## **Safety Before and During an Explosive Incident**

- You cannot always avoid a violent incident. In order to increase your safety you may want to use a variety of strategies.
- Determine whom you would call for help in a violent situation. Make note of friends', relatives', neighbors', police, and hotline phone numbers.
- Change or add locks on your doors and windows as soon as possible.
- Check your lighting in your apartment hallways or outside your home. Make sure all areas are well-lit at night.
- Practice how to get out of your home safely. Identify which doors, windows, elevator or stairs would be best.
- Decide and plan where you will go if you leave home in an emergency situation.
- Have a packed bag ready and keep it in a secret but accessible place so you can leave quickly.
- Identify a neighbor, family member or friend you can tell about the violence and ask them to call the police if they hear a disturbance coming from your home. Create a signal for them to call the police, like leaving a certain light on, a shade that's pulled down, or a code word so that the perpetrator will not know help is on the way.

## **Safety After an Explosive Incident**

- Get medical attention if you are hurt any way.
- Call the police, if you haven't done so already, and even if you are in a safe place.
- Have the police or a friend or relative take pictures of your injuries.
- Speak with an advocate from a local domestic violence program who can inform you of your rights and options.

## **Safety When Preparing to Leave**

- If you choose to leave your partner it is best to do so with a careful plan in place. Batterers often strike back when they believe that you are leaving a relationship.
- Determine where you will go. Options include: friends, relatives, shelters, safe houses or motels.
- Determine how you will support yourself and your family.
- Leave money, extra keys, copies of important documents, and clothes with someone you trust.
- Purchase a calling card to use.
- Assess the seriousness of your situation. If the batterer has access to weapons, has threatened homicide or suicide, has stalked you, or abuses drugs or alcohol you may be in severe danger. If this is the case consider relocating and/or changing your identity or call 800-782-6400.
- Consult with an advocate from a local domestic violence program or call 1-800-852-9075.

## **Safety on the Job and in Public**

- Friends, family and co-workers can help protect you. Consider carefully which people can help you the most.
- Decide people at work you need to tell about the situation (boss, co-worker, or security).
- Have someone escort you to your car, bus or train. Use a variety of routes to go home if possible. Think about what you would do if something happened while going home.
- Have a co-worker screen incoming telephones calls and document any type of harassment.

Source: Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance: <http://www.mass.gov/mova>  
Distributed by: Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections, Victims' Rights Unit  
(602) 364-3513 or 1-800-387-3062

### Safety with a Protective Order

- Protective orders do not work in all situations, but it is a good idea to have one if you fear retaliation from the batterer for leaving the relationship.
- Consult with a court advocate from the local domestic violence program or a victim witness advocate from the district attorney's office.
- Make extra copies of the protective order and keep them with you at all times. Also keep copies in: your glove box, at friends' or relatives' homes, at work and at your children's daycare or school
- Call the police if the batterer violates the order.
- If you move to another town or state remember that the protective order is still valid. It is a good idea to register the protective order in your new town.

### Safety with Children

- Teach children not to get in the middle of a fight, even if they think they are helping.
- Practice calling 911 with them.
- If they are old enough, teach them a safe place to go during a violent incident.
- Inform the children's daycare or school of the possibility of violence.
- Tell children not to let anyone know their address.

### Safety and Your Emotional Health

- The experience of being battered and verbally degraded by your partner is exhausting and emotionally draining. The process of building a new life takes courage and incredible energy.
- If you are thinking of returning to a potentially abusive situation, discuss your safety plan with someone you trust.
- Try to go through a third person if you need to communicate with the batterer.
- Have positive thoughts about yourself and be assertive with others about your needs.
- Attend a support group to get reassurances from others who have been through similar situations.
- Decide whom you can call freely and openly to give you the support you need.
- Read articles, books and poetry to help you feel stronger.
- Find something you like to do for yourself. You deserve to have some happiness and fun in your life.

### Checklist

These items might best be placed in one location, so that if you have to leave in a hurry, you can grab them quickly. It also may be a good idea to store them outside the home. What you need to take when you leave:

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| __ Identification                                | __ Address book                              |
| __ Driver's license, car title & registration    | __ Pictures                                  |
| __ Children's birth certificates                 | __ Medical records for all family members    |
| __ Your birth and marriage certificates          | __ Social security card, for self & children |
| __ Money, credit cards, ATM card, telephone card | __ Welfare identification                    |
| __ Protective order                              | __ School records                            |
| __ Lease, rental agreement, house deed           | __ Work permits                              |
| __ Checkbooks, bank books & withdrawal slips     | __ Green card/immigration papers             |
| __ Health insurance or medical card              | __ Passport for self & children              |
| __ Insurance papers                              | __ Divorce papers, including custody order   |
| __ House & car keys                              | __ Jewelry                                   |
| __ Medications or prescriptions                  | __ Pets (if you can)                         |
| __ Small objects you can sell                    | __ Children's small toys                     |